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ABSTRACT

Fifty fifth and sixth grade students participated in a study attempting to document motivational differences that may be associated with two approaches to classroom writing instruction. Thirty of the students were involved in the process-oriented approach where students are encouraged to write multiple drafts of assignments, attending to issues of content in initial drafts and dealing with correction of mechanical errors in the final stages of editing. Twenty of the students participated in the product-oriented approach which may be characterized by single draft assignments which are graded by the teacher with high importance placed on mechanics. Motivation constructs considered in the study included: (1) entity (ability is stable) versus incremental (ability increases with effort) theories of writing ability; (2) initial importance of mechanics versus content; (3) confidence; (4)intrinsic motivation; (5) utility value; and (6) perceived competence. Results indicated that motivational factors may be instrumental in mediating students' actual performance of writing tasks in the classroom, and motivational consequences may differ as a result of process and product oriented approaches to writing instruction. (NH)

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Motivational Factors Related to Writing Instruction in Classrooms Using Process and Product Oriented Approaches

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The National Writing Project and others have been instrumental in promoting a method of classroom instruction that emphasizes the importance of a process approach to the teaching of writing. Teachers using this approach encourage students to write multiple drafts of assignments, attending to issues of content in initial drafts and dealing with correction of mechanical errors such as spelling and punctuation in the final stages of editing. Students are also encouraged to share their writing with peers, seeking and using substantive feedback as part of the revision process (see Atwell, 1987; California Department of Education, 1983; Calkins, 1986; Graves, 1983). This process oriented approach is proposed as an alternative to more product oriented approaches to writing instruction, which may be characterized by single draft assignments which are corrected and graded by the teacher with high importance placed on mechanical correctness. The innovative teaching techniques have become increasingly more popular and and seem to be influencing students' writing competence. A process orientation is inherent in both the "natural process" and "environmental" modes described by Hillocks (1986), both of which are considered to be more successful than the more common "presentational" (e.g. product oriented) mode (p. 247). Important motivational variables may be instrumental in mediating this success, however, and the motivational aspects of these new writing programs have not been systematically examined. Motivationally, what is different about the new writing programs?

The present study represents a preliminary attempt to document motivational differences that may be associated with these two approaches to classroom writing instruction. The purpose of the study is to explore student motivational differences with the assumption that motivational factors may be instrumental in mediating students' actual performance of writing tasks in the classroom. Innovative instructional approaches may be successful because of their positive motivational consequences. In order to examine the motivational consequences of the two instructional approaches, a questionnaire designed to assess students' attitudes and emotional responses to writing was developed. The following motivational constructs are considered in the study: incremental versus entity theories of writing ability; initial importance of mechanics versus content; confidence; intrinsic motivation; utility value; and perceived competence. Students were also asked affect related questions such as, "How often do you feel excited (frustrated, worried, bored...) when you are writing?"

The first construct considered in the study is a distinction between incremental and entity theories of writing ability. Incremental-entity theories of writing ability represent an extension of Dweck's incremental-entity theories of ability (see Dweck, 1983). Entity theorists view ability as stable, while incremental theorists view ability as increased with effort. I hypothesized that the process oriented approach, by focusing students' attention toward the importance of <u>improving</u> a written piece of work through effort and revision, reflects an **incremental theory of writing ability**. In contrast, the product oriented approach, by focusing students' attention on normative performance in a single sitting, reflects an **entity theory of writing ability**. Good writers with an entity theory may believe they will always write well, regardless of how much planning or revising they invest in each task, and poor writers with an entity theory may believe they will always write poorly, regardless of how hard they try. In contrast, incremental theorists tend to focus more on the task itself, believing that both better and poorer writers can improve any piece of writing as they continue to re-work it, making use of new ideas and constructive feedback. The first question in the present study asks, to what degree do students in

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process and product oriented writing classrooms report incremental-entity differences in their theories of writing ability?

The second construct considered in the study is the **initial importance of mechanics versus content**. Product oriented instruction, with its emphasis on single draft writing assignments and high value placed on mechanical correctness, requires students to focus on avoidance of spelling and punctuation errors while simultaneously making important decisions regarding content. Process oriented instruction, in contrast, encourages students to value the communication of important ideas first and to tackle mechanical errors later in the final editing stages of writing. The second question in the present study asks, to what degree do students in process and product oriented classrooms report differences in their focus on mechanics or content issues when they first write something?

The third construct considered in the study is **confidence**. I hypothesized that a process approach, with opportunities for writing multiple drafts of assignments and encouragement to make use of substantive feedback, would enhance confidence for students who might feel defeated in product oriented writing classrooms. Process classrooms also encourage peer response, discussion, and open sharing of in-progress and published writing that may tend to enhance (or inhibit) student confidence. The third question in the present study asks, to what degree do students in process and product oriented classrooms report differences in confidence about their writing?

The fourth construct considered in the study is **intrinsic motivation**. Process approaches to writing instruction aim to enhance students' sense of personal control of their writing. For example, students are more often encouraged to select their own topics or write about personally meaningful experiences in process oriented than in product oriented classrooms. The fourth question in the present study asks, to what degree do students in process and product oriented classrooms report differences in instrinsic motivation toward writing?

The fifth construct considered in the study is **utility value**. How useful do students in the two kinds of classrooms think writing can be? I hypothesized that because students in process oriented writing classrooms are more likely to have opportunities to write for many different purposes and to make important decisions about their writing, they might come to view the act of writing as potentially more useful. The fifth question in the present study asks, to what degree do students in process and product oriented classrooms report differences in utility value?

The sixth construct considered in the study is **perceived self-competence**. The two instructional approaches provide very different opportunities for students to make social comparisons of their writing. Product oriented classrooms emphasize normative evaluation (e.g. grades) and only the best work tends to be available for display, for example. Process oriented classrooms, on the other hand, encourage the open sharing and criticism of all students' work in all stages of completion. Standards for evaluation of competence may thus become more individualized amd ambiguous. Do the different approaches toward writing instruction influence student's views of themselves as more (or less) competent writers?

Finally, students were asked a series of **affect** related questions. Assuming that emotions can act as important motivating factors, different instructional approaches may tend to enhance (or inhibit) feelings such as pride, frustration, worry, excitement, and boredom. The final questions considered in the present study are,to what degree do students in process and product oriented classrooms report differences in the frequency of emotions(both positive and negative) experienced when they are writing?

To answer these questions, students in both types of writing classrooms were given a questionnaire designed to measure the motivational constructs discussed above.

Method

Subjects

Fifty fifth and sixth grade students participated in the study. Thirty of the subjects received process oriented writing instruction. These students met regularly in groups to share and discuss their writing, were encouraged to make use of feedback and to pay attention to editing of mechanical errors after decisions regarding content had been made. Teachers gave extensive feedback (both written and oral) and provided examples from literature as models, but students were responsible for making their own changes in future drafts. Normative grades were not given, and all students had equal opportunities to share, publish, and display their best work. These students had teachers who encouraged open discussion of the difficulties involved in good writing, with the hope that more effort and persistence would result in better writing. Twenty of the subjects received writing instruction that was more product oriented. The teacher corrected errors and gave letter grades to assignments that were written in single drafts. Students did not revise or edit their written work. Only outstanding papers (with grades of A or A+) were displayed on the classroom bulletin boards. High importance was placed on mechanical correctness (e.g. proper spelling, punctuation, and neat handwriting.)

Questionnaire

Students were given the motivation questionnaire in groups in December. A graduate student or teacher read through each item with the students and the sessions took about twenty minutes. All items used a 1 to 4 scale, and were counterbalanced so that socially desireable answers were equally distributed toward high and low values. The questionnaire was written to contain a number of items representative of each of the motivational constructs studied. These items were later combined into separate subscales. Examples of items included in each subscale are presented below.

The first half of the questionnaire used a format similar to Harter's Perceived Competence Scale (1982). Children read statements about two types of kids (e.g. "Some kids like other people to read what they've written *and* some kids prefer not to have other people read their writing.") They were asked to select "the kind of kid that's most like you" and then indicate whether the statement is "really true for me" or "sort of true for me". Sample items of this type were as follows:

<u>initial importance of content versus mechanics</u> (total of 4 items)
1. Some kids get frustrated when they can't spell a word *and*
some kids think about the ideas first and correct their spelling later.
2. Some kids think about their ideas first and go back to check question marks and periods later *and* some kids think a lot about where question marks and periods go when they first write something.

<u>confidence</u> (total of 5 items)
1. Some kids like to write about a lot of different things *and*
some kids like to write about familiar things they know they will be able to write about.
2. Some kids would prefer not to have the teacher read their stories to the class *and*
some kids would like the teacher to read their stories to the class.
3. Some kids think they write as well as most of the other kids in the class *and*
some kids aren't so sure whether they write as well as others in the class.

<u>intrinsic motivation</u> (total of 5 items)
1. Some kids like to write *and*
some kids don't like to write.

2. Some kids write only when the teacher tells them to *and*
some kids write at home or on their own because they want to.
3. Some kids work harder on a writing assignment they know is going to be graded *and*
some kids work the same, whether or not a writing assignment is going to be graded.

In the second half of the questionnaire, students were asked to consider items such as, "I think writing about a subject can help kids learn more about it" and indicate whether they "strongly disagree, sort of disagree, sort of agree, or strongly agree" with the statement. Other items focused on frequency by asking students, for example, "How often are you happy with what you've written?" Responses available to this type of question were: "never, not very often, sometimes, and a lot". Sample items of this type were as follows:

incremental-entity theories of writing ability (total of 5 items)
1. I think some kids are just good writers, even when they don't try very hard.
2. I think even good writers need to work hard in order to write well.
3. I think if you have to work hard to write something, you're probably not a very good writer.

utility value (total of 3 items)
1. I think writing about a subject can help kids learn more about it.
2. I think writing can help kids understand their feelings.

competence (total of 4 items)
1. How hard is writing for you?
2. How good a writer are you compared to most kids your age?
3. How clearly can you write down your ideas?

Results

The first analyses assessed subscale differences between the two groups. Subscale scores were determined by summing the responses and dividing by the number of items. Students who did not answer one of the questions for a given subscale were dropped from that particular analysis. Oneway ANOVAs by group resulted in significant differences for several of the subscales. As predicted, the entity versus incremental subscales were significantly different, $F(1,49)=13.40$, $p<.001$; students in the process oriented group gave stronger incremental theory responses ($X=3.4$) than students in the product oriented group ($X=2.9$). (All items were recoded so that a "1" indicated a strong entity theory response and a "4" indicated a strong incremental theory response.)

In addition, the groups differed in students' attitudes toward the initial importance of mechanics versus content $F(1,44)=7.90$, $p<.01$; students in the process oriented group indicated they were more likely to focus on content ideas than mechanical details (e.g. spelling, punctuation) in initial stages of writing ($X=3.0$) than students in the product oriented group ($X=2.3$). (All items were recoded so that a "1" indicated a strong emphasis on mechanics and a "4" indicated a strong emphasis on content.) The groups also differed in self-reports of confidence, $F(1,40)=4.18$, $p<.05$ with students in the process oriented group indicating higher levels of confidence ($X=2.8$) than students in the product oriented group ($X=2.3$). In addition, the process oriented group indicated higher levels of the utility value of writing ($X=3.4$) than the product oriented group ($X=2.8$), $F(1,48)=15.44$, $p<.001$. Group differences on the intrinsic motivation or competence subscales were not significant.

The second analyses examined group differences in response to a number of affect-related questions. Oneway ANOVAs by group resulted in no significant differences in self-reports of

boredom, pride, embarrassment, disappointment, or feeling pleased while writing. However, students in the process oriented group indicated they more often felt *excited* when they were writing ($\bar{X}$=3.09) than did students in the product oriented group ($\bar{X}$=1.9), $F(1,48)=23.29$, $p<.0001$. In addition, the process oriented group indicated they also felt *frustrated* ($\bar{X}$=3.23) and *worried* (3.13) more often than students in the product oriented group ($\bar{X}$=2.15) and ($\bar{X}$=2.3), $F(1,48)=18.82$ $p=.0001$ and $F(48,1)=9.60$ $p<.01$, respectively.

Discussion

The results are consistent with the hypothesis that motivational consequences may differ as a result of process and product oriented approaches to writing instruction. Although most students in both classrooms report incremental theories of writing ability, students in the product oriented classroom lean more toward entity theories than students in the process oriented classrooms. The multi-draft approach and emphasis on giving and using substantive feedback also seems to enhance the primary importance of content over mechanics and higher confidence in students. Children in process oriented writing classrooms are encouraged to believe that everyone has something important to say and can be successful if they participate and persist in the process. These findings reflect the same attitude differences. This incremental view does not reflect a lowering of standards or reliance on "fun" activities, however. The predicted differences in intrinsic motivation and perceived self-competence were not significant.

Students in process oriented classrooms don't seem to be saying "writing is easy," but rather the opposite. They are more emotionally involved in the writing process and they seem to be more aware of its usefulness, however. Enhanced personal investment fosters emotional involvement -- both positive and negative. Frustration and worry result when students struggle to discover and convey important thoughts, and excitement takes over as they conquer the difficulties inherent in the writing process. Writing is a highly personal and difficult task, and if innovative approaches to writing instruction successfully foster this idea, students may be more willing to invest in the process.

Thus, it may be that the success of innovative instructional approaches to writing instruction may be explained by motivational factors. Further research is needed to determine the degree to which this may be the case.

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MOTIVATIONAL VARIABLE	PROCESS	PRODUCT	F
(Subscales)			
Incremental Theory	3.4	2.9	(1,49) = 13.40***
Initial Importance of Content/Mechanics	3.0	2.3	(1,44) = 7.90**
Self-Confidence as Writers	2.8	2.3	(1,40) = 4.19*
Intrinsic Motivation	2.9	2.6	N. S.
Utility Value	3.4	2.8	(1, 48) = 15.44***
Self-Competence as Writers	2.9	3.0	N. S.
(Affects)			
Excited	3.1	1.9	(1,48) = 23.29***
Frustrated	3.2	2.2	(1,48) = 18.82 ***
Worried	3.1	2.3	(1,48) = 9.60**

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* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.